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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of National Estimates

17 July 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Comments on Stassen Memorandum to NSC
of 29 June 1956

1. The subjects covered by the Stassen memorandum are so broad and general, extending far beyond the disarmament field alone, as to make detailed comment difficult. Moreover, the courses of action in Section III are given only in brief summary form; the feasibility or desirability of a number of them cannot be weighed adequately without a more detailed statement of the implementing steps involved.

General Comments

2. It is obscure as to whether the various disarmament proposals (III - A, B, E, F, G, and H) are thought of as having a serious possibility of Soviet acceptance or are regarded primarily as a propaganda "initiative" likely to win plaudits in the free world. We believe, and have underscored

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this in all our previous comment on proposed US positions, that the disarmament negotiations involve primarily a struggle to influence world opinion and to preserve Western unity rather than an advance toward agreements with the USSR. We believe that the present group of proposals taken as a whole are sound from this point of view, especially since their underlying thought of moving toward comprehensive inspection by stages rather than demanding a complete and airtight system in one package would be viewed abroad as giving a desirable flexibility to the US position. Our principal serious reservation concerns the effect in West Germany of the course of action proposed in Paragraph III, K, which as pointed out in Paragraph 18 below, we think could be seriously adverse to US policy in Germany.

3. While we believe that the proposed revision of the US position formulated prior to the London talks would be tactically effective from a propaganda point of view, we do not believe that it should be undertaken in any expectation

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that the USSR can be induced by this new approach to move step by step toward a comprehensive plan of disarmament and inspection. In our NIE on the USSR now nearing completion (NIE 11-4-56) we estimate that the Soviet leaders have concluded that no such comprehensive agreement is possible without making concessions to the West which they would regard as unacceptable. In particular, we think it unlikely that the USSR will ever accept the feature of aerial inspection, even as an ingredient of a partial system. The USSR might accept certain limited steps (such as III F, the ban on nuclear tests, which it has already advocated) but it would not permit "effective inspection to verify fulfillment of the commitment."

Comments on Section I: "The Situation"

4. Paragraph I. B.1. With respect to the "Fourth Country Problem" which Mr. Stassen emphasizes, we believe his prediction that in the "relatively near future" fifteen or twenty nations will have nuclear bombs to be an exaggeration. In our view the requirement for effective means to deliver

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nuclear weapons, in addition to possession of the weapons themselves, militates against the development of nuclear weapons capabilities by any but a few nations in the foreseeable future. Moreover, any nation developing and producing atomic weapons would itself probably require at least limited nuclear weapons tests. Considering all the appurtenances required for nuclear warfare, we believe only two or three more than the present three nations would embark on a native weapons program. (The Fourth Country problem could arise in another way from that mentioned in the paper. In addition to independent manufacture there is the possibility of transfer to other states by the principal producers. The US and USSR might under certain political compulsions or on purely military grounds make nuclear weapons available to their allies and associates.)

5. However, even if some "fourth countries" acquired limited nuclear capabilities, we estimate that they would be reluctant to use them even in local situations for fear of risking US or Soviet intervention with far greater nuclear

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capabilities. Therefore, we do not accept the argument, also made in the previous Stassen papers, that the advent of limited "fourth country" capabilities or of ICBM's will necessarily magnify the "potential for igniting a world war."

Without discounting the dangers inherent in such a situation, the restraints on all states against courses of action involving risk of world war would nevertheless be real. Prospective weapons developments do indeed make world war more destructive, but they do not necessarily make it more likely.

Thus far at least, the growth of nuclear weapons and delivery capabilities in the US and USSR seems to have been one of the factors contributing to a decreased likelihood of war.

6. Paragraph I. B.2. We agree that the USSR's current political and economic offensive in underdeveloped areas poses "a major threat to the longer term security of the US," but we do not believe that the threat is primarily one of Communist "takeover." The more immediate danger is a movement of non-Communist states toward closer association with the Bloc

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and away from the US. This particular danger would tend to be dissipated were the Communists to revert to a primary emphasis on subversive activities intended to effect "takeovers." In our view the principal threat to US interests arises from the fact that enlarged Soviet and Bloc trade and credits might jeopardize sources of supplies for certain US and Western industries and impair markets for their products, but more importantly from the fact that the Soviet economic offensive might alter the climate of opinion in such a fashion that free world nations may become neutral or hostile toward the US.

7. Paragraph I. C.1. We believe that Communist China will wish to acquire nuclear capabilities whether or not various free world nations do so. China's acquisition of such weapons will depend for some time to come on the USSR's willingness to provide them, and we think that Soviet willingness would not depend particularly on acquisition of nuclear weapons by other countries. On the other hand, we do not

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think that Communist China's acquisition of nuclear weapons would automatically be followed by similar action by Japan. Leaving aside capabilities, the political inhibitions in Japan are formidable. These might or might not diminish if China had nuclear weapons. Similarly, the German case seems to us unlikely to be affected by China's acquisition of nuclear weapons. These weapons are now barred to West Germany by treaty, and any change in this situation would raise such serious opposition in Western Europe and be so disruptive to NATO that the Germans themselves would be unlikely to suggest it for some time to come.

8. Paragraph 1. C. 4. The problems raised in this paragraph concerning US relationships with its allies are real. However, there are a number of possibly misleading implications: (a) that US allies will not have a continuing interest in mutual security relationships with the US despite apparent reduction of the Soviet threat; (b) that cooperation with the US necessarily requires either an extra heavy defense burden to

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carry "semi-obsolete arms" or "extreme" restrictions on trade with the Bloc, especially since those restrictions are not now "extreme"; (c) that cooperation with the US should involve special trade and payments benefits.

Comments on Section II: "The Concept"

9. Paragraph II. B.1. Still "greater reliance" on nuclear weapons raises the question of whether the US should further reduce its capabilities for contingencies in which reliance on conventional weapons might seem preferable. We cannot exclude the possibility that, if nuclear stalemate becomes complete, the Bloc might resort to large-scale conventional warfare, as is pointed out in draft NIE 11-4-56. This comment would also bear on Paragraph II. B. 4, which implies that the US can count on not being confronted with situations which require more than small-scale conventional capabilities.

10. Paragraph II. B.5. From an intelligence point of view we would question whether "graduated economic penalties" for

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nations which take action "seriously adverse to US interests" would not in many cases be counterproductive. Sanctions or other economic reprisals against Burma or Afghanistan because they develop economic ties with the Bloc, for example, would be as likely as not to drive them even closer to the Bloc and would result in widespread criticism of the US.

Comments on Section III: "Courses of Action"

11. Paragraph III.A. This revival of the President's proposal to Bulganin of 1 March 1956 to control future production of fissionable material would probably have an effective propaganda impact, especially the new feature of a specific date (1 July 1957) for implementation. However, there is little chance that the USSR would accept the requirement for "effective international inspection."

12. Paragraph III. B. The proposal to provide a nuclear-armed UN force is presumably intended to appeal to nations which have no nuclear weapons and to discourage their desire

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to acquire them by providing an international sanction against nuclear aggression. This would not be an effective sanction against the three powers which now have nuclear weapons and would be theoretically effective only against fourth countries which might enter the field, and only then if the Great Powers agreed on joint action against such an aggression. We think this proposal would not be effective even as a propaganda move because: (a) the prolonged and futile UN discussion of an international force has left this idea with little credit among UN members, who have long since concluded that in the absence of agreement among the Great Powers it is not a realistic proposition; and (b) the idea of legitimizing nuclear weapons by making them a means of enforcement would run counter to the widespread sentiment that they should be outlawed altogether. Soviet agreement would be entirely out of the question since the USSR has consistently refused to abandon its veto right by acknowledging the legitimacy of procedures under the 1950 "Uniting for Peace" resolution.

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13. Paragraph III. E. This proposal would reverse the trend toward larger weapons stockpiles only if combined with the proposal in III A. for devoting future production to non-weapons purposes. Since, however, each power would still retain a "substantial nuclear weapons capability," and each would be the judge of its own requirements, the reversal of trend would not significantly reduce the threat of nuclear weapons from the point of view of non-nuclear powers.

14. Paragraph III. F. As we have indicated in Paragraph 3 above, the USSR would be likely to accept this proposition, though without inspection to verify fulfillment of the commitment. We observe, however, that (a) we have estimated in NIE 11-2-56 that the Soviets could satisfy, with acceptable but not optimized nuclear assemblies, their major military requirements for weapons, including warheads for all types of missiles, without further nuclear weapons tests; and (b) since we now rely upon test detection systems as a primary source of data on Soviet nuclear weapons development, a suspension of tests would deprive the US of critical intelligence.

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15. Paragraph III. G. Control of guided missile research and development, even if restricted to long or medium-range missiles and outer space vehicles, would require a degree of inspection the USSR would be most unlikely to accept. This proposal would probably receive wide support in other nations, however, and should be a very effective propaganda move.

16. Paragraph III. H. The Stassen proposal can be read to mean that, given Soviet acceptance of the US aerial inspection scheme, the US could accept the limited type of ground inspection proposed by Bulganin. We should point out that this ground inspection as outlined in Soviet proposals has hitherto been considered inadequate to meet US requirements, especially with respect to the objects to be controlled and freedom of movement, access, and communication for inspection teams.

17. Paragraph III. J. Without more details on the features of a partial inspection system it is impossible to judge whether it would in fact be capable of "progressive development" or

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avoid the danger of "providing a false sense of security."

We believe that the idea of moving toward comprehensive inspection by stages would be viewed abroad as giving desirable flexibility to the US position. As we pointed out in an earlier comment on the comprehensive plan, its scale was so vast and its requirements so sweeping as to create suspicion, even among US allies and certainly among neutrals, that the US was intentionally setting standards impossible to accept. On the other hand, there would be risks in any partial system since it would presumably not prevent the USSR from developing weapons and deploying forces which could launch surprise attack without detectable prior preparations. These risks would of course exist in the absence of any inspection system at all, and are therefore an argument against a partial system only if the latter was allowed to provide a "false sense of security." In any event, we believe that the USSR would be unlikely to accept a partial system which included any aerial inspection, on the ground that it would then

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have no basis in principle for opposing extension of the system. We believe, in fact, that the USSR would be embarrassed if it were asked to spell out and implement the vague proposals for ground inspection which it has already made.

18. Paragraph III. K. It seems to us that the course proposed would have very serious disadvantages at this time in respect of our relations with the Adenauer government. Adenauer has taken heavy political risks in pledging a 500,000-man contribution to NATO and the proposed move might undercut his position by seeming to concede the argument his opposition has been making that a West German force on this scale is unnecessary. It would also almost certainly be interpreted in Germany as a step toward a complete withdrawal of US forces. This would give great impetus to political forces which would be willing to entertain a unilateral German deal with the USSR. Although this course of action is described as "part of a move toward the

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reunification and freedom of all of Germany," we do not believe that the inducement offered (mutual limitations on forces and armaments in Germany) would lead the USSR to negotiate an acceptable settlement, and therefore consider that the disadvantages of the proposed course of action outweigh the advantages.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

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H. R. BULL
Lt. General, USA (Ret.)
Acting Chairman

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